

THEORY IS GRAY — BUT LIFE IS GREEN!

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“How to explain a radical nationalism today in an advanced capitalist-imperialist Canada – a nationalism that all the facts show is anti-capitalist and projects the challenge of socialism? The law of combined and uneven development* would appear to be of great use in grappling with this problem. (*Novack: Understanding History, Pathfinder Press -- See W18)

Because of the historic delay of the Canadian-U.S. socialist revolution which will lead to the realization of a Socialist United States of the North American continent, a process of integration or absorption of the economy of Canada with that of the mightiest imperialist power in the world is taking place under capitalism. This has resulted in the widespread and growing development in English Canada over the past several years of a nationalism — a phenomenon which is traditionally part of an earlier bourgeois stage of development.

Due to the distorted and weak development of Canadian capitalist society, the Canadian bourgeoisie and their state acquiesce to this process of integration and by so doing violate these growing national aspirations. Arising as they do at a time of increasing capitalist crisis in Canada and across the world, and at a time of widening radicalization, these national aspirations lead toward conflict with the Canadian state, and toward a linking with the tasks of the Canadian and international socialist revolution. We will deal with this matter at length in a subsequent contribution.”

It is necessary for the Canadian Trotskyists to evaluate the Ontario Waffle - Movement For an Independent and Socialist Canada (MISC) on two main counts.

FIRST COUNT. The dispute on nationalism in our movement requires it, and besides some comrades who identify with the document *Canada and the Crisis of World Imperialism* have specifically demanded it of us.

Comrade Whitton of Ottawa, in his contribution to Bulletin No. 25, challenges "Why does Dowson not analyze the subsequent evolution of the Waffle," all the more that "Dowson contends that the birth of the Waffle in the NDP was a confirmation that 'anti-U.S. imperialist sentiment leads to an anti-capitalist understanding.'"

It would appear that Comrade Whitton thinks that the evolution of MISC, after the Waffle was roughed up by the right wing reformist NDP brass and it decided not to fight its way back into the NDP but go its own way, affirms his view that the nationalism "stamped on the Waffle by its leadership" led to its "break from class politics."

Comrade Dupont of Montreal in his contribution appearing in the same bulletin challenges us to learn from the Waffle-MISC experience; "I think somewhat symbolic of this whole debate is the development of the left grouping Waffle-MISC, which by means of nationalism is running into the arms of the bourgeoisie, though they sound a lot like they are fighting it... I find the

Waffle's evolution very telling. Its main weakness was its lack of theoretical understanding of Canadian nationalism and imperialism and class politics. It fell prey, or more exactly, represented the Canadian nationalist sentiment in all its glory. It adapted itself to a mood, a vague sentiment, and for this reason broke away from the NDP and class politics. Comrades who do not want to follow in MISC's footsteps should learn from its mistakes."

These views echo widely-expressed views in our movement following the early September 1972 LSA-LSO plenum which adopted the line of a report that finally found expression in the document *Canada and the Crisis of World Imperialism* — and the late August split in the Waffle forces — between the MISC — and those forces which, including ourselves, have gone on to build the Left Caucus in the Ontario NDP.

The decision of the major forces of the Waffle, including all its best known figures, to no longer carry the fight in the NDP, was said by many leading comrades to be proof-positive that nationalism (granting we agree on characterizing the Waffle from the beginning, and now MISC — as of August 1972 — as nationalist) leads inevitably to a break with working class politics. And if the split away from a continuing fight in the NDP at the London conference itself was not proof enough, the future evolution of these forces was certain we were told, to prove that nationalism in advanced capitalist-imperialist Canada (English-speaking) is thoroughly reactionary.

To anyone who questioned the position that Waffle's leaving the NDP meant breaking from class politics, leading comrades stated with conviction that Waffle's evolution would provide the acid test of their theoretical concept that nationalism in English-speaking Canada is completely reactionary. Though it was by no means clear where these forces would go; there was no evidence that they were moving to the right — to the petty bourgeois Committee for an Independent Canada, for instance — and it was possible that they might not even hold together since MISC encompassed such a wide spectrum of views; their evolution, there was no question, (it) was going to be to the right, because of their nationalism.

Well, the proof of the pudding is in the eating, or as Goethe put it — theory is gray, but life is green.

It is now, five months later, quite clear that the predictions made by those comrades identifying with *Canada and the Crisis of World Imperialism* with regards to the significance of the MISC break and its subsequent evolution, have proven to be completely wrong.

The Waffle-MISC remains a powerful force and indeed it is a growing force on the left. It must be recognized that MISC, in breaking from the NDP, can by no means be said to have broken from class politics. It stands just as firmly on the left ideologically as it did when it was directed inside the NDP. In our opinion all the evidence shows that it has tended to move further to the left — certainly in that it is popularizing some basic elements of Marxist theory to a far broader radical audience, largely an NDP left wing audience, than the left today in the NDP itself, or the old socialist caucus was ever able to do.

All the predictions of a contrary course were based on a theory. That theory, that the nationalism that has been developing in advanced capitalist-imperialist English-speaking

Canada, and which till now has found its highest political expression in Waffle-MISC, is in its very essence reactionary — has proven to be dead wrong. And it is now four years of radicalization since the Waffle appeared on the horizon.

SECOND COUNT. But we are by no means just left with a theoretical debate. MISC presents Trotskyism with a big challenge on two fronts. (1) As builders of the independent revolutionary vanguard, the LSA/LSO – Waffle/MISC is becoming a powerful pole of counter-attraction to the League. It is even probable that shortly we may be faced with a mass centrist formation on the Canadian left. Needless to say it will be nationalist, because of the simple fact that nationalism is the central factor in the Canadian radicalization.

MISC presents Trotskyism with a big challenge (2) as socialist activists in the NDP, attempting to build a broad left wing in the NDP, and to recruit the best elements to the League. All our knowledge of the Waffle-MISC, its present general level of politics, its orientation, and the character of the forces gathered around it — particularly in the key Toronto area, requires us to re-evaluate our work in the NDP – not the place of the NDP in our politics as a strategic concept, but whether it is possible to develop an effective left wing in the NDP in the next period? – what the future holds in the whole next period for the Left Caucus?

It appears to us that MISC, standing on the outside of the NDP, but holding, you might say, a watching-brief, retains the support of the same sizable bloc of NDPers it was able to rally when it was inside the NDP. The Waffle left, while remaining in the NDP is at this time actually outside the NDP. It is MISC politically, and it is oriented to the MISC.

There is another – A THIRD MATTER – that should be dealt with. Ever since the Waffle split from the NDP last September there has been spreading through our ranks varied expressions of opinion to the effect that our failure to consolidate any appreciable forces from the whole three-year Waffle experience, flows on the one hand from – our failure to have taken on, to have combated in a rigorous fashion the nationalism expressed in the Waffle from the very first appearance in the pages of *Labor Challenge* of the *Manifesto for an independent and socialist Canada* — or on the other hand, flows from our failure to have posed the challenge of the independent revolutionary socialist vanguard in as clear and vigorous a way as was necessary... that we adapted or capitulated to right wing social democratic reformist pressures over the whole past period.

It cannot be overlooked that the LSA-LSO has been proscribed by the NDP leadership – that membership in the LSA/LSO automatically bars one from membership in the NDP, Because open identification with the Fourth International is used as proof that we are an opponent political party to the 2nd International-affiliated NDP, we have followed a policy of restricted identification of our movement with the Fourth. Over the past period, in part due to the impact of our tenacious, and widely publicized struggles against various expulsions under this witch-hunt ruling, and in part due to the overall radicalization and its reflection in the NDP which makes such harassment highly unpopular and even counter-productive from their own interests, the NDP brass has pulled back. However it should be recalled that just as the Waffle was taking on organized form in the fall of 1969 we were faced with the need to launch a struggle against the Richmond Hill expulsions.

We shall take up this second point – that our strategic orientation to the NDP and our identification with the Waffle as the broad left wing in the NDP led us to hide the banner of the independent LSA-LSO.

Trotskyism, the League and its press, have been running issues on the NDP. This has been due not only to our own activities, which are extensive considering our numbers; all our members hold NDP memberships and are active to varying degrees in the constituency clubs, our running League candidates on every electoral level, and the circulation of our press – a very high percentage of our readers are NDPers. The NDP brass itself has persisted in making Trotskyism an issue – for instance, for a time it labeled the Waffle, Trotskyist.

Our press always carries substantial material on the independent activities of the LSA-LSO, all of which are directed to bringing the best elements developing in the radicalization, and over the past period, particularly Wafflers, into our ranks. We carried material on all the ongoing discussions and debates in the NDP and within the left wing particularly.

How did we handle the May 6 decision of the NDP brass to move to disband the Waffle following their Oshawa blow? (*their expulsions –ed.*) We gave big coverage to the Waffle defense. With the brass' refusal to circulate the Waffle statement at the Vichert Committee, to the party membership and union affiliates, as they did their own brief, (Waffle had no press of its own) we reproduced it in *Labor Challenge*. But we didn't let the matter rest there. The Waffle brief in defense of a socialist caucus was good; and we could have reproduced it in our own press as being merely the voice of Waffle, and left it at that. But we did not. We carried a full page article by comrade Fidler alongside the brief in the May 22 issue. This article, in an effective and popular way explains what's behind the NDP leadership's moves to suppress the Waffle, the social origin and role of the reformism of the trade union and NDP bureaucracy, and the need not only to make a revolution but to build a revolutionary party. We will reproduce the last couple of paragraphs :

"What is needed is a mass revolutionary party with a consistent anti-capitalist program and strategy, a party that wages uncompromising struggle against the parties of capital on all levels, electoral and "extra-parliamentary", and that utilizes all means necessary to build the self-confidence and strength and revolutionary commitment of the working people. Such a party must be a part of the international revolutionary workers' movement.

"Seen in this framework there is no contradiction between working to build the revolutionary party, and enthusiastic support and participation in the NDP.

"When revolutionary socialists raise the demand 'Win the NDP to Socialism,' they do not express illusions that the NDP can become a revolutionary party. They are expressing their conviction that the struggle for a revolutionary program and leadership will be expressed within the NDP for a whole period to come.

"The LSA/LSO, the nucleus of the revolutionary party, is actively engaged in that task. While the NDP expresses the present of the Canadian working class, the LSA/LSO represents its future."

The next issue of our press, June 5, contained full page coverage of a speech that Ross Dowson, as LSA/LSO executive secretary, gave to the St. George NDP constituency association on 'Trotskyism and the NDP.' Among other things Dowson said "The development of a class analysis of Canadian society and the projection of a socialist solution to the working people of Canada is the Number One challenge before the NDP. Trotskyism with its developed class struggle program and its revolutionary internationalist strategy, is the only consistent theory of socialism..."

Dowson characterized the NDP leadership, "not necessarily as individuals but as a social category" as "convinced reformists of essentially the same type who in Germany at the head of the massive social democratic movement, adapted and eventually capitulated, even placing their own heads in the noose of Hitler's hangman, This can best be illustrated by their dogmatic concept of parliament....."

The speech ended – "The character of the NDP is such that it cannot establish socialism in Canada. Serious socialist forces cannot be built, cannot be educated, gathered together and accumulate essential experiences solely on the basis of NDP activity. The progressive content that resides in the NDP over the next period will be wasted unless the influence of the League for Socialist Action-Ligue Socialiste Ouvrière is widened and its forces strengthened."

This speech was subsequently published in full as a leaflet and there were saturation distributions of it at every NDP and Waffle meeting possible.

The next issue, June 19, carried three articles in a center-spread devoted specifically to the struggle in the NDP. One of the three articles, written by Ross Dowson, addressed itself to elements in the Waffle who were tending to withdraw from the struggle with ultra-leftist phrase-mongering, and posed the significance of the NDP, but also the challenge of the LSA/LSO.

"The NDP will not carry through the liberatory socialist transformation of this country, with or without the Lewises (but whose leadership of the NDP is of, course by no means accidental). However that does not settle the question of the NDP.

"Even though it is narrowly parliamentarist and non-action oriented — being the political, or the generalized expression of the radical discontent of the Canadian working class, the NDP remains the focal point of all mass action....

"The NDP is the mass political expression of independent working class politics. And any radical not in the NDP and/or not in the League for Socialist Action/La Ligue Socialiste Ouvrière, a league of revolutionary socialists who give unconditional though critical support to the NDP, is totally ineffectual in the struggle for a socialist Canada."

From an article in our July 17/72 issue it was apparent that Waffle's leading spokespersons were headed out of the NDP to establish a Movement for an Independent Socialist Canada, and were attempting to rally Waffle supporters behind them. The relationship of forces at that time did not appear to be clear and we saw as our task to rally as many forces as possible to stay in the NDP and fight back.

In an article in the July 31/72 issue comrade Steele comments on a statement released by Laxer and other leading Wafflers at a July 19 meeting, arguing for the formation of MISC, although it is obvious that we saw the choice was heading up to either staying in the NDP to fight the right wing, or moving outside to the formation of MISC, we continued to pose the challenge of the League [LSA].)

(We wrote) "Laxer's promise of a new socialist party some time in the future is no more attractive (than the NDP). Revolutionary socialists recognize that the NDP, a broad party with an entrenched leadership wedded to the concept of parliamentary reform is not sufficient to organize and lead the mass working class actions that are needed to bring about a socialist Canada. For that, a mass revolutionary party in the tradition of the Bolshevik party of Lenin and Trotsky that led the Russian revolution in 1917 is needed. The revolutionary socialists of the League for Socialist Action are now attempting to assemble the cadres of such an organization."

In our next issue dated August 21/72, appearing on the eve of the London conference where the settlement would take place, we continued to argue against the MISC option and for a stay-in-and-fight policy. Taking up the MISC projection of "some undefined Socialist party of the future", we asked, "How will such a party be built? Will it be built by ignoring the NDP?" We explained our orientation to the NDP as meaning to "map out a campaign of struggle in the ridings and union locals for a socialist program and internal democracy in preparation for the December ONDP convention. This is the perspective that the revolutionary socialists, the Trotskyists of the League for Social Action, have consistently fought for."

We think that the above material culled from our press from the beginning of the NDP brass's attack on the Waffle, until the September London conference which saw the Laxer-Watkins leadership take the majority of the Waffle towards the formation of MISC, shows that there is no real substance in any belief that we failed to gain more to our ranks than we should have reasonably expected because of any tendency on our part to hide the independent face of the League. Perhaps it could have been done more effectively, but it is clear that we posed the challenge of Trotskyism again and again.

The Marxist-Trotskyist profile, certainly in our press – we are not able to evaluate the activity of various comrades involved in the struggle who, of course, have to take into account the specific situation in which they work — was very high indeed, over this whole crucial period. Our movement cannot be faulted here.

In our opinion it was not any failure to have combated Waffle's nationalism from the beginning, back in 1969, but our sudden decision to make nationalism the dividing line between left and right in the summer of 1972 that has to be examined. And we combined with that a very mechanistic and rigid interpretation, a false interpretation of our orientation to the NDP, to the effect that to leave the NDP is to break with class politics. That is the major reason why we have failed to capitalize up until this time, in any substantial way, on our big Waffle experience in the NDP.

Since this was not just a conjunctural error – made at the time of the showdown last fall – but continues to be an error and of increasing importance with relation to MISC, it is well worth pondering over it.

We had a theory that (a) nationalism in advanced capitalist English speaking Canada is reactionary , and (b) that to leave the NDP as such is to break from class politics. Both Whitton and Dupont, from the quotations above, consider that the former inevitably leads to the latter.

This mechanical and formalistic interpretation of our orientation to the NDP projected before militants who were rapidly moving away from the NDP after a brush with the brass, whereby we told them that there were doing much more than breaking from a political structure but they were breaking from the only class that could bring about socialism, rendered all our efforts to project the independent Trotskyist LSA/LSO as an alternative, totally irrelevant. For despite all our talk about Trotskyism and the League, wasn't the League, as an independent organization, from the very beginning of the debate and even when it was clear that the majority were through with the NDP, on and right up to the very end, demanding ever more sharply of the militants that they remain in and continue to work in the NDP, or be forever doomed. Weren't we making the NDP, even as we stepped up our talk about our independent Trotskyist organization, the sine qua non of revolutionary politics in Canada. Clearly, yes!

While neither Whitton or Dupont demand a re-evaluation of our handling of the Waffle from the time that our press scooped everyone by publishing its statement *For an Independent and Socialist Canada*, until the organization of MISC, it would seem logical that they should do so. Wasn't Waffle nationalist from the word go? And, according to Dupont, MISC was its inevitable result! Besides if neither Whitton or Dupont call for such a re-evaluation, others do.

In our opinion, in the whole first period while no doubt we made some errors, our general attitude to Waffle was correct. Was Waffle nationalist? There is not the slightest doubt. From its very first statement *For an Independent Socialist Canada*, it was nationalist! It called itself nationalist, and so did everyone else. We might have put the word in quotes, but we couldn't get around the fact that it was nationalist.

In our first comment (August. 11, 1969) we said "Starting, from 'nationalism' that is, concern for Canada's vanishing independence in relation to the United States, the *Manifesto* acknowledges the anti-imperialist implications of this position, and concludes that 'capitalism must be replaced by socialism;' which it correctly identifies with 'national planning of investment' and 'the public ownership of the means of production ...,' It rejects the concept of 'an independence movement based on substituting Canadian capitalists for American capitalists or in public policy to make foreign corporations behave as if they were Canadian Corporations. '"

Of course, we had many criticisms of the *Manifesto* and of many other statements that were issued in the Waffle name, but never, as far as our research disclosed, for the whole first period, up until an article under the name of Carl Fleming Jan. 31/72—over two and a half years of intense activity did we take the occasion to even touch the Waffle's nationalism.

At its summer 1971 plenum the central committee adopted a report devoted specifically to an analysis of the Waffle and the NDP. By then the Waffle had become established as a mass left wing in the NDP. with a solid core of 20% of the delegates to the 1971 federal convention, and its candidate for the party leadership getting 37% of the votes.

In that document we recognized that the Waffle was nationalist. "The adoption of a document on 'Canadian-US Relations' at our 1968 convention had armed our movement to respond sensitively and correctly to the 'Canadian nationalism' – the anti-US imperialist sentiment – that motivated the authors of the *Waffle Manifesto*."

And further on; "Moreover, the explicitly Canadian-nationalist tone of the 'Manifesto' no doubt was a factor in winning support from a layer of NDP elements who were radicalizing in their opposition to U.S. domination of Canada but were not prepared to endorse a socialism which proceeded from internationalist considerations".

In a section entitled 'The Politics of the Waffle' we described the Waffle as "politically heterogeneous, in that it encompasses a wide range of opinion, ranging all the way from revolutionary internationalist to liberal reformist and patriotic. But it is essentially left, social democratic, that is reformist". The document challenges the description of the Waffle as 'centrist', but recognized that "some Waffle leaders might be characterized as 'centrist', for example Jim Laxer."

Earlier it stated "we all recognize that the key aspects of the Waffle correspond to many of the major demands the revolutionary socialists have advanced in the NDP since its foundation; e.g. public ownership of major industry, right of self-determination for Quebec, student faculty control of the universities, and more recently, a program for women's liberation.."

In an attempt to define our differences the document stated; "The vast majority of Waffle adherents – and virtually the whole of its leadership – do not understand the class nature of the capitalist state, the role and dynamics of the working class in the struggle for power, nor of course, the vital role of the revolutionary vanguard party. Many of the demands they project are identical or similar to our transitional demands, but they lack the **revolutionary strategy** which alone can tie these demands together, give them internal coherence, leading to the struggle for workers power".

But we said nothing about Waffle's nationalism. Why? The answer would seem to be obvious. Apparently no one could see how this nationalism (in capitalist imperialist Canada) could be said to be reactionary. In Waffle, to be sure reactionary expressions of bourgeois nationalism appeared from time to time, as they do in the NDP, in the unions and among the Canadian working class. We took these on as they came. They appeared to have no greater significance and no one suggested that they in any way flowed from the declared and recognized nationalism of the Waffle, that developed from the takeover by U.S. capitalism of the commanding heights of the economy, with the collaboration of the Canadian capitalist class, and called for an independent Canada that could only be realized by socialism – rather than from an analysis of the world crisis of capitalism.

According to the CC document; "It is almost a truism now to say that the appearance of the Waffle confirmed the correctness of our orientation to the NDP,,,"

We could find no trace of bourgeois nationalism in this "Canadian nationalism" that called for a socialist Canada and was out to take the leadership of the mass labor formation from

parliamentary reformists. Thus it was without hypocrisy or cant that we could say it was an "anti-US imperialist sentiment that motivated the authors of the *Waffle Manifesto*."

In a major article (Mar. 9, 1970) on the Toronto Americanization of Canada teach-in, attended by 1,300, we attacked Robin Matthews' demand for a quota system on the number of US academics to be hired on Canadian universities by favorably quoting Kenneth McNaught's attack against "this sterile nationalist approach by noting how many US professors were in fact radicals" and contributions by two comrades who said that the way to establish Canadian control of the universities is through student-faculty-staff control – and research and study programs related to helping the working people take power from the capitalist ruling class that presently controls the intellectual factories of this country. We challenged Laxer's view that Canada is a US colony, and the view of "many Waffle supporters (who) seem to think that the problem of bureaucracy in the union is limited to the internationals, with the answer – assert rank and file control over all unions in Canada."

Six months later (October 5/70 issue, D,F.) we summed up our searching critique of Cy Gonick's *Revolutionary Reformism – A Strategy*, which incidentally did not touch on Waffle's nationalism with the words "Thus the logic of the Waffle development as it generalizes the experience of this growing extraparliamentary opposition, is to transcend reformism in all its forms, and move toward the program of revolutionary socialism,,"

The following issue (October 19/70, JR) we covered the Ontario NDP convention where the Waffle presented its *Manifesto for a Socialist Ontario in an Independent Socialist Canada*. We had some critical things to say about Waffle, but nothing about its nationalism as such. In fact we said that "its key resolution for a Socialist Ontario contained considerable, excellent analysis, from a socialist point of view." Summing up the convention – "The convention mood was militant anti-imperialism — for a settling of accounts with US corporations in Canada.... Highlight of the convention was its firm response to the Trudeau government's sell-out of natural resources to U.S. interests."

Six months later (April 26/71, DF-& AM) we carried an overall appreciation of Waffle. And, we said nothing about its nationalism as such,

"The Waffle's position that foreign-owned corporations must be nationalized and operated under workers control, has given a whole new dimension to the growing movement against U.S. domination of Canada... Building on a correct insistence that public ownership must be the key instrument of socialist planning, the Waffle has popularized this important concept through its campaign against the sell-out of Canadian energy resources to U.S. imperialist interests."

In fact we saw it tending to take an internationalist view, although we were not very explicit. "The Waffle manifesto and foreign policy resolutions (unfortunately none was submitted this year) directly point the way to a fundamental reorientation of the party away from complicity in the cold war to support of the national liberation and socialist movement around the world."

A few months later (July 5/71, AM) we had an opportunity to comment on Waffle's nationalism in a report on the NDP counter-conference on Ontario and Canadian Independence. We ended the article: "Summing up the conference, Mel Watkins noted that the party is now firmly committed to what he termed the 'nationalist' viewpoint — that is, opposition to U.S. imperialist domination — and the task now was to make sure this was the number one issue in the next election. The question now, he said, was will an independent Canada be capitalist or socialist? 'The next time there is a government conference on nationalism' he urged 'Let's call a counter-conference on socialist strategy.'"

Five months later (November 22/71) we carried a statement by the editors on the Amchitka protests which we said expressed a deep and growing unease among broad layers of the population against U.S. domination of this country. We pointed out that "The Waffle which is attempting to build a broad left wing in the NDP by basing itself on the broad anti-imperialist sentiment, abstained from the Amchitka actions and in some cases even opposed them. The various ultra-left sectarian currents failed to respond to the anti-Amchitka movement — whether as a result of their lack of understanding of the progressive content in this anti-imperialist sentiment (e.g. the ex-Maoist CPL) or because of preconceived and false notions of how this anti-imperialist sentiment is likely to develop (CLM)..."

Strange to say we did not make any analysis of the fact that all other left currents, including the nationalist Waffle abstained, that we alone threw ourselves fully into this massive nationalist — or anti-U.S. imperialist mass action that saw a partial general strike by the organized BC labor movement.

It was not until our Jan. 31/72 issue, in a contribution that we made in the name of the LSA/LSO to the discussions preparatory to the Ontario Waffle conference, that we took up nationalism in the Waffle — even then we did not relate it to the nationalist essence of Waffle. We attacked what would have to be called an ultra-left or sectarian policy adopted by leading elements of Waffle which we pointed out had been adopted by no general body of Waffle — the ill-fated attempts "to build explicitly-defined 'socialist caucuses in the unions.'"

We attacked a workerist line that these leading elements started to project outside of the NDP around the Texpac strike and the auto pact. Among these elements were Penner and Flexer who we were subsequently to become better acquainted with as leaders of the Red Circle.

Here is what we said; "Instead of projecting a class struggle alternative to trade union militants in the NDP, the Waffle has carried a nationalist line and sometimes attempted to substitute itself for the main forces of organized labor (Texpac, auto pact campaign)."

It is not at all clear from this article what we meant by Waffle's nationalist line — but in all probability it had to do with the auto/pact campaign which we dealt with in another article in the same issue, and in an article that appeared in the issue following that.

Leading elements in the Waffle became convinced, following Nixon's decision to impose a surcharge on imports to the U.S. (Canada was exempted) and widespread talk of re-negotiations of the auto pact, that the U.S. was about to initiate a process that would result in the de-industrialization of Canada.

Leading Wafflers, along with the CP, proposed public ownership of the U.S.-owned auto industry and the production of a 100% Canadian car — at the same time they saw the U.S. trade union bureaucracy, specifically the UAW leadership, in the face of increasing inter-imperialist rivalry, supporting their own bourgeoisie in the hope that it would assure U.S. autoworkers jobs. They saw the Canadian international union leadership, specifically of the UAW being able to completely ignore their Canadian base and supinely go along with the international brass who they predicted was prepared to sacrifice the Canadian membership's jobs. Waffle succeeded in organizing a Windsor autoworkers conference in Windsor of some 300, 50 of them UAW members.

We said "The strictly nationalist campaign proposed by the CP and Waffle leads not to deepening the anti-imperialist and socialist struggle, but towards a narrow parochial nationalism,"

It may sound strange today, in light of the line of *Canada and the Crisis of World Imperialism*, but the editors replied that the Waffle leadership does not understand the relationship between Canadian and U.S. capitalism — the "special relationship" and the "integrated" character of the Canadian-U.S. economy. *Canada and the Crisis of World Imperialism* sees the end of the "special" relationship due to increasing inter-imperialist rivalries, and denies the integrated character of the U.S. and Canadian economies .

"U.S. capitalism views Canada somewhat differently from its competitors in Europe and Japan. The Canadian economy is so highly integrated with that of the U.S., there is so much U.S. ownership of Canadian industry and Canada provides such a large market for U.S. goods, that there is little reason for the U.S. to radically modify the 'special relationship' at this time."

By our Feb. 28 issue we were recording two phenomena: (1) the NDP leadership were preparing to expel Waffle — the Hamilton Mountain resolution called for the expulsion of "any clearly identifiable ongoing political group"; and (2) an increasing tendency on the part of Waffle" to operate in the labor movement more and more with a strategy and program that poses the Waffle as a political organization independent of the NDP. This view was challenged in a letter to the editor appearing in the next issue, and we modified our expression — "that the conference failed to project any action within the NDP."

Laxer was projecting a turn, in the face of the de-industrialization, towards communities dependent on one or a few manufacturing or resources-based industries where he said the breakthrough for socialist organizing would take place first.

It was primarily these "workerist politics" of Waffle spokespeople "the action is in the hinterlands" that we called in an editorial "ultra-nationalist politics". And its fears that Canada would be de-industrialized and face massive unemployment that was causing its leading spokesmen to increasingly express "its anti-imperialist policies... in crudely nationalist rather than socialist terms."

To the question we posed in our editorial "Where is the Waffle Going?" we answered that Waffle was turning away from the NDP. "On the face of it, the strategy projected by the

leadership of the Hamilton conference must mean; leave the campus, ignore the feminist movement, at least it's most dynamic section (we reported that Jackie Larkin dismissed the campaign for repeal of anti-abortion laws, as 'liberal, legalistic, parliamentarist' and 'middle class') never mind the anti-war movement – anti-imperialism doesn't mean internationalism, our problems are at home” – meaning, we presume, Waffle's increasing concern about the devastating results that would follow from its speculated de-industrialization of Canada.

But we made no serious attempt to connect this "crude" nationalism with Waffle's essential nationalism. In fact five months later, on July 11, 1972, the Political Committee adopted a memorandum in which we accepted the widespread anti-U.S. imperialist sentiment, with its anti-capitalist thrust, as nationalist, as a new form of national consciousness, flowing from the unique relationship between Canadian and U.S. capitalism and their ruling classes.

It is clear that the main thrust of our critique of Waffle henceforth was our impression that its top spokespersons were tending more and more to move in a direction independent of the NDP and even to leave the NDP. In the light of our strategic orientation to the NDP it naturally became a matter of major concern that the Waffle, which had become the broadest and most effective left wing to ever develop in the CCF-NDP, might rip itself out of the NDP and overnight leave the NDP, for a long time to come, empty of any possibilities for us to recruit from.

We quite correctly launched a sharp struggle to stop the Waffle from pulling out of the NDP.

However at the same time an intense and highly factional struggle burst out in our own movement. The majority of the PC moved to dump the memorandum that, basing itself on the 1968 'Canada and U.S. Relations' resolution, sought to transcend it, in the light of our four years experience, by identifying the LSA/LSO with nationalism in English-Canada as a key aspect of the radicalization. The PC majority launched a vigorous campaign, climaxing at our September/72 plenum, which characterized nationalism in English Canada as bourgeois and reactionary. Our line with regards to Waffle, clearly and unmistakably nationalist, which we carried over a three to four year period in the central area of our work, suddenly underwent a 180 degree turn.

It soon became the fundamental precept of our movement that it was the nationalism of Waffle that was behind its tendency to move out of the NDP and to split from the NDP – that to break from the NDP was to break from class politics, to betray the class struggle. This, we said, was only a logical consequence of nationalism – it was proof positive that nationalism is bourgeois and reactionary.

We became completely incapable of evaluating where the Waffle was going from the tactical point of view of the employment of our own forces. We followed a blind course up to the September split, all during it, and have continued to do so right up until now. We turned our orientation to the NDP from a strategic concept, with many possible tactical variations, into a fetish.

Obsessed with the concept that Waffle's nationalism was reactionary to the core and determined their every move, it became impossible for us to even visualize that its leadership

(which we knew rejects our aim of building the Leninist party) might be contemplating a pull-out from the NDP, while still retaining their main connections and evading a showdown fight until more favorable circumstances. We blinded ourselves, tactically. We revolutionary socialists made the question of continued work "in the social democratic, reformist NDP a fundamental one, a matter of the highest principle in our relationship with the largest single force in the radicalization to date.

Needless to say this fetishism of the NDP, this making a principle of staying in the NDP, has nothing at all in common with our longstanding practice with regards to the NDP.

To be sure, in our 1970 document on *Our Orientation to the NDP – the Strategy and its Tactical Application* we said that "the NDP is the touchstone of class politics. All working class politics revolve around it and an incorrect position on it is fatal." But in the next paragraph we said we are flexible in the application of our orientation, that it is necessary for the LSA/LSO to take advantage of every opportunity that presents itself right now to turn the relationship of forces between ourselves and (not the class, but) the reformist leadership of the NDP to our advantage. It is necessary to build the cadre now."

With that touchstone concept, over a period of years, on the one hand we dissolved the public face of our movement to conduct entry, and on the other hand we pulled all possible forces out of the labor party formation to constitute an independent Trotskyist organisation. In fact we had an experience very much like the experience that we have just had with the Waffle — from Orillia to London. In the late forties a fairly broad left wing that had had a large experience fighting within the CCF, despite our efforts to bring it to our own movement and/or to keep it struggling within the CCF where we had concentrated our forces, was continuing to move out. The central leadership and the BC comrades had extensive discussions around a practical proposal that in view of the continued direction out of the CCF of this left wing, a sizable portion, if not all of our forces should be prepared to go out with them.

Where does this fetishistic concept of our orientation to the NDP come from — a concept that, following our failure to convince this mass left wing formation to stay in and fight, blocked us from re-evaluating where the whole thing was going? If there is any area where our cadre has been developed, it is in the CCF-NDP arena. The document *Our Orientation to the NDP: the Strategy and its Tactical Application* was presented to our convention only three years ago. It very clearly demonstrated our organizational flexibility, our completely non-fetishistic attitude to the NDP.

By July 19, (from our July 31 issue), it was clear where the leading spokespersons of Waffle, despite all our efforts to keep them in and win them to the LSA/LSO, were headed — outside of the NDP. And not in defeat, but as Krista Maoets told an East Toronto rally, to "take the debate outside the party" in order to "create the base for a future upsurge among working people of this country." Laxer challenged Wafflers (including, if not primarily, our own forces) to "remove their institutional blinkers—that is, not be hung up on the NDP, and build a new organization – a Movement for an Independent and Socialist Canada."

Laxer projected great and new possibilities for the Waffle supporters, once freed of the NDP, what he called their parasitic existence in the NDP and their dead-end fights with the NDP

leadership. Laxer presented the NDP as having moved to the right, having become "unable to respond to the developing upsurge in the working class." He called for the building of an anti-imperialist movement that would "help lay the basis for a true socialist party of the future which might come from some future radicalization of the NDP, or by the creation of a new party."

We reported all this in our press but made not the slightest move to adjust our tactics to it. With practically all the known Waffle leaders carrying this line, the relationship of forces between "go MISC" and "fight-back" was becoming obvious. What blocked us from seeing this reality, and making appropriate tactical adjustments? It would appear obvious that what stopped us, all our three years experiences with nationalist Waffle notwithstanding, was the sudden discovery that its nationalism was in essence bourgeois and that it was reactionary to the core.

It was our suddenly, new found conviction that Waffle was intrinsically reactionary that permitted us to watch the left wing move outside the party with complete equanimity. One might say a sort of death wish for our whole Waffle experience permeated us.

For us, the Waffle experience ended at London. According to an article (Sept. 11/72, JS) in *Labor Challenge* "the best traditions of the Waffle are now to be found in the developing Left Caucus." But our forces in the NDP did not attempt to appear as the continuation of the Waffle inside the NDP — very difficult to be sure, since nearly all the Waffle's public figures went MISC. Did we discuss it as a tactic? We doubt that. For in fact the 3-1/2 year Waffle experience had to be probed to the very depths.

To attempt to pull together and to analyze the facts of a phenomenon is not at all the same as to defend it, in whole or in any of its aspects. It is necessary in order to understand it in all its complexity.

The September 11/72 balance sheet article is largely based on grappling and developing various points that are expressed by various elements in Waffle, which we once said was composed of a wide range of opinion — from left social democratic, to revolutionary socialist, to ultra-left and shadings in between.

It is certainly not possible to say with any seriousness, as that article claims, that MISC "ignores the main enemy in Ottawa.... Ignoring the Canadian ruling class, its state, the trade union bureaucracy and the NDP, all central aspects of the class struggle." The highly speculative character of this article is probably due primarily to our uncertainty as to what would happen to the diverse elements composing MISC. The majority stated unequivocally that it was going to the right — to the Committee for an Independent Canada, to national socialism, to fascism????? But perhaps we also felt that it might break up — with important elements finding their way back to the NDP where once again we would (1) work with them in building a class struggle left or (2) have to wage irreconcilable war against them within the NDP left. ?????

Our press did not deal with MISC as such until the October 23/72 issue (DF). The occasion was the federal election and a mass circulation leaflet put out by MISC presenting their view. The article is not a serious educational analysis of the MISC view, designed either to arm

our own forces or to influence MISC supporters. It is, as one paragraph clearly says: "A reading of the Election Special confirms the correctness of those who criticized the formation of MISC as "a retreat from class struggle politics **through the NDP**.(RD emphasis)

While a preceding paragraph starts with the statement: "Its campaign is unabashedly nationalist", and quotes the leaflet to the effect that "The Waffle MISC is 'working to build a movement that can deal directly with the problem of ordinary Canadians and that can take on the vital task of winning Canada for Canadians'"..., it continues on with the central contradiction that faces our movement. "It (MISC) proposes that the 'obvious solution' to U.S. ownership is 'to take control of our economy through public ownership beginning with the resources industries'."

Our press tried to grapple with MISC once again in the December 25/72 issue, in the light now of some continued activities of MISC. We repeated and thereby affirmed that the function of the October 23 issue was to confirm "the correctness of those who criticized the formation of MISC as a retreat from class politics through the NDP", and added from the previous article an observation that had been made: "But what is most lacking is any evidence of a strategy to bring about a socialist Canada". The author asked "What did MISC have to say about class politics, about the NDP, about the trade unions and the various independent radicalizing movements." What follows is a presentation of major aspects of a speech by James Laxer on "A Socialist Strategy for Canadian Independence."

This more or less factual report quickly undoes much of the "drawing to their logical conclusion" style of the October 23 article. For instance, we now find that according to MISC, through Laxer at any rate, there are two important concepts that English Canadian anti-imperialists should grasp

"Firstly, they should respect and defend Quebec's 'right to full self-determination' and fight any attempt by the Canadian government to intervene against Quebec's rights". And secondly, they "should have no illusions about the class nature of the state — a repressive instrument of the ruling class, Laxer stated, although it is a 'class controlled by foreign capitalists'."

What follows from there is two columns of type where the author raises "some important questions **NOT** (emphasis RD) dealt with by Laxer in his presentation." They are tendentious to say the very least, with their "suggesting", their "implying" etc., etc.

But what is notable about this article as a contribution to our discussion is that, four months since the split, we are still unable to come to grips with, to disclose in any effective way the alleged reactionary and bourgeois essence of MISC's nationalism.

One cannot help out wonder as to the significance of a parenthetical comment in this article to the effect that "MISC partisans shun the designation 'nationalist' — a term they reserve for 'petty-bourgeois nationalists' like members of the Committee for an Independent Canada".

We gather that this comment arises from some personal exchange with Laxer. However he has subsequently made it known that he does consider himself a Canadian nationalist.

Laxer considers that there is a socialist nationalism as distinct from the conservative nationalism of the historian Creighton, which he says reflects the interests of a sector of the Canadian capitalist class that has no historic perspective.

At any rate it is not what Laxer thinks of himself or what he thinks MISC is, as interesting as this is, but what we as Trotskyists think MISC is. In our opinion it is impermissible to waffle on this matter. Waffle from the very beginning, and now MISC, can only be designated as nationalist.

How to explain a radical nationalism today in an advanced capitalist-imperialist Canada – a nationalism that all the facts show is anti-capitalist and projects the challenge of socialism? The law of combined and uneven development would appear to be of great use in grappling with this problem.

Because of the historic delay of the Canadian-U.S. socialist revolution which will lead to the realization of a Socialist United States of the North American continent, a process of integration or absorption of the economy of Canada with that of the mightiest imperialist power in the world is taking place under capitalism. This has resulted in the widespread and growing development in English Canada over the past several years of a nationalism — a phenomenon which is traditionally part of an earlier bourgeois stage of development.

Due to the distorted and weak development of Canadian capitalist society, the Canadian bourgeoisie and their state acquiesce to this process of integration and by so doing violate these growing national aspirations. Arising as they do at a time of increasing capitalist crisis in Canada and across the world, and at a time of widening radicalization, these national aspirations lead toward conflict with the Canadian state, and toward a linking with the tasks of the Canadian and international socialist revolution. We will deal with this matter at length in a subsequent contribution.

No one in our movement who now holds to the view that nationalism of the Waffle and MISC is bourgeois and reactionary (by bringing to our attention some key formulations from Lenin) has in any way responded to Lenin's stricture that it is necessary to examine all social questions within definite historical limits, that account be taken of the specific features distinguishing that country from others in the same historical epoch. To our knowledge no effort has yet been made to analyze, in any serious way, the concrete form of expression of nationalism in English Canada -- least of all by the (*LSA—ed.*) majority. But that holds true for the Revolutionary Communist Tendency too. Among their number are comrades who veered from, as Wafflers, taking advantage of some peculiar contradictions that allowed them to seize the official leadership of a provincial section of the NDP – to a position of rejecting in toto (*totally*) our entire orientation to the NDP.

In our opinion our line on Waffle has been correct – from July 14, 1969 when we published its *Manifesto* – through to our 1970 convention and the document *Our Orientation to the NDP: the Strategy and its Tactical Application*, which said "Our last convention in 1968 prepared our movement to meet developing Canadian nationalist sentiments which we interpreted as anti-U.S. imperialist, leading to anti-Canadian capitalist and to class consciousness. When this burst into

the NDP with the formation of the Waffle grouping we were ready to integrate ourselves into it." We didn't suddenly go wrong with the PC adopting the July 11, 1972 memorandum. Our line went wrong when we adopted an obscurantist statement committing us to opposition to bourgeois nationalism at the September 1972 plenum and in adopting the so-called line of the discussion which led sometime later to the formulation and adoption by the PC of the document *Canada and the Crisis of World Imperialism*.

It is this false line on Canadian nationalism that violates our almost four years of experience, that makes mockery of our theory, that miseducates our cadre, that makes serious revolutionary politics almost impossible, that isolates us from one of the central factors in the Canadian radicalization.

March 15, 1973